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RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF WILLITON.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE YEAR 1954.

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

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A.F.M.HOWARD.,M.S.I.A.,ADDITIONAL SANITARY INSPECTOR.
R.J.ASHMAN., CLERK TO THE DEPARTMENT.

H.CHIDGEY.,PART-TIME RODENT OPERATIVE.
BRITISH ROAD SERVICES.,REFUSE COLLECTION (By Contract).

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WILLITON RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE YEAR 1954.

To the Chairman and Members of the Council.

Mr.Chairman and Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting my annual report on the health of the district for the year 1954. The general health of the district was satisfactory. There were no cases of Infantile Paralysis or Diphtheria. One case of suspected Food Poisoning was notified but enqiries led to no satisfactory conclusion.
Measles and Whooping Cough were the main infectious diseases notified during the year there being 24 and 20 cases respectively.
The sanitary and other circumstances of the area are detailed as follows :-

Section A. Vital Statistics and Social Conditions.
Section B. Water Supplies, Sewage and Refuse Disposal.
Section C. Housing.
Section D. Food Inspection and Supplies.
Section E. Public Health Complaints, Nuisances, Etc.
Section F. Camping.
Section G. Other Acts administered by the Department.
Section H. Summary of Inspections and Visits made by the Department's Officers during the year 1954.

Section A.
Vital Statistics & Social Conditions.

Area	97,369 acres.
Population (Estimated Mid-year Home Population)	13,270
Number of Dwelling Houses	4,025
Rateable Value (1st April, 1955)	£71,141
Product of a Penny Rate	£325.2s.8d.

Live Births.	M.	F.	Total.
Legitimate	71	82	153
Illegitimate	7	1	8
Totals.	78	83	161

Birth Rate per 1000 population (live births)	12.7
National Rate per 1000 "	15.2

Still Births.	M.	F.	Total.
Legitimate	-	3	3
Illegitimate	-	-	-
Totals.	-	3	3

Still Birth Rate per 1000 population	.22
National " " " "	.24

Deaths.	M.	F.	Total.
Deaths from all causes:-	108	88	196

Death Rate per 1000 population	14.7
National " " "	11.3

Health Services.

The District is served by Hospitals at Minehead and Musgrove Park, Taunton, and Hospitals for the Aged Sick at Williton, Bridgwater and Taunton.
Ambulance services voluntarily run, are available from Watchet and Minehead, also from Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton.
Steam disinfection facilities continue to be available at the Williton & District Hospital for the Aged Sick.

Notifiable Diseases.

Disease.	Cases Notified.
Smallpox	Nil
Scarlet Fever	1
Diphtheria	Nil
Enteric Fever	"
Measles	24
Whooping Cough	20
Puerperal Pyrexia	Nil
Opthalmia Neonatorum	"
Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis	"
Dysentery	"
Malaria	1
Pneumonia	Nil
Acute Poliomyelitis	"
Encephalitis Lethargica	1
Chicken Pox	Nil
Erysipelas	"
Tuberculosis (Respiratory)	8
" (Non-Respiratory)	1
Food Poisoning	1

Section B.
Water Supplies, Sewage & Refuse Disposal.

There were no serious shortages of water in the district. Local shortages were experienced at Cutcombe and West Hawkwell during the summer.
Three Public water supplies have been extended or improved. New treatment works have been installed at Doverhay, Porlock, for chlorination and other treatment of the water.
During the year an additional four existing and seventy-two new dwellings have been connected to Public supplies.
Sampling of water for bacteriological analysis has been carried out from each main supply at monthly intervals. In general the samples proved satisfactory. Where unsatisfactory the cause of the contamination was sought and matters put right.

Samples Taken.	Satisfactory.	Unsatisfactory.
302	246	56

Private Water Supplies.

Bacteriological examination of used and proposed supplies was as follows:-

Samples Taken.	Satisfactory.	Unsatisfactory.
41	23	18

Sewage Disposal.

Sewage disposal from many localities in the district is far from satisfactory giving rise to nuisances, in ditches, streams and on the foreshore along the coast. Surveys have continued with a view to the provision of adequate sewerage and the following schemes have been submitted to the Ministry for approval.

1. Roadwater, Washford, Watchet Scheme
2. Crowcombe Village Scheme
3. Blue Anchor Scheme (Part 1.)
4. Porlock extension Scheme.

New sewerage schemes have been completed for parts of Holford and Williton and part reconstruction completed at Cutcombe, Kilton and Old Cleeve.

Refuse Disposal.
Most of the district has a monthly refuse collection, but the collection at Porlock, Dunster and Williton is fortnightly. Proof that the present facilities are inadequate is gained by the amount of indiscriminate tipping of household refuse in the district, especially ashes. This gives rise to one of the most common forms of complaint received by the department.
Four refuse tips are in operation and are of the semi-controlled type. Fly and cricket breeding has not been a serious nuisance and rat and mice infestations have been dealt with by the Rodent Operative.

Section C.
Housing.
The Housing Repair and Rents Act, 1954, came into force on the 30th August, 1954, and with it a new standard describing a 'fit house'. Only time will tell what effect this will have on existing standards The Act also requires local authorities to submit slum clearance proposals for dealing with all the unfit houses in their areas, the return to be made within one year of the commencement of the Act. Certain increases in controlled rents are allowed under the Act providing that the dwelling is in all respects fit and in good repair. Any aggrieved tenant served with a notice of increase may appeal to the local authority for a Certificate of Disrepair in which case the increase in rent is withheld until such time as the necessary repairs have been completed and a Revocation Certificate issued by the Local Authority.
A survey has commenced for the purpose of ascertaining the number of houses to be included in the slum clearance proposals.
Three houses have been the subject of grants under the Housing Acts and the works completed. Grants in these cases totalled £1124. Maximum grant of £400 was paid in respect of one property.
Thirty other schemes of improvement are under consideration or approved but not completed. The Council has refused grants in thirteen cases. This power to award grants of up to £400 in respect of improvement works to dwellings has eased the acute housing situation especially in isolated localities and it is hoped, will lead to the saving of many dwellings which would otherwise fall in to a dilapidated state and become the subject of demolition or other orders. Enquiries concerning, and interest in the grant scheme is increasing steadily and takes up most of the time of one Officer.
Seven dwellings have been made fit by informal action under the Housing Act.
No Certificates of Disrepair have been applied for.
There are no Common Lodging Houses or Houses Let in Lodgings within the district.

Section D.
Food Inspection & Supplies, Etc.
Meat.
With the decontrol of meat marketing in July, 1954, slaughtering once again commenced in four slaughter houses in the district.
The facilities, though not ideal, are considered satisfactory. Butchers have co-operated satisfactorily in informing the department of times of slaughter and providing facilities for the inspection of meat and offal. Condemned meat and offal has been disposed of privately under the surveilance of the department and in the circumstances this method is considered satisfactory.
The amount of meat slaughtered and inspected is as follows :-

	Number Inspected.	Whole Carcases Condemned.	Offals Condemned. Pluck.	Head & Tongue.	Lungs & Heart.	Whole Livers.	Part Livers.
Beasts	174	-	-	7	8	13	11
Cows	72	-	-	3	2	3	3
Sheep	849	2	-	-	2	27	-
Pigs	185	1	-	4	7	-	-
Calves	41	2	-	-	-	-	-

Weight of Meat Condemned :- Beef 4481lbs
Veal ..... 8 "
Pork ..... 80 "
Lamb or Mutton ..... 120 "

Imported Meat Condemned:- Beef ..... 66 "

Other Foodstuffs Condemned :-

Tins of Meat & Fish 12
" " Fruit & Veg. 5
" " Condensed or Evaporated Milk 2

Bacon 1461lbs
Cake ..... 6 "

Food Premises & Food Hygiene.

It has been the practice of the department to inspect all catering establishments within the district just prior to the season in order that defects and other faults may be put right in good time. Frequent visits are also made when other duties take the Inspector to that part of the district.

It can be said with confidence that the hygienic standard of most of the seventy-one catering establishments in the area is commendable. Few requests for improvement have had to be served.

A subject allied to food hygiene is the question of litter baskets for the retention of ice-cream and other food wrappers. Many establishments have provided their own baskets within reasonable distance of the premises. It is to the credit of T.Wall & Sons, Ltd., Ice-cream manufacturers that they have assisted by the provision of baskets. It is hoped in the near future that this authority will supplement the supply of baskets throughout the district.

Section E.
Public Health Nuisances, Complaints, Etc.

As already mentioned, many complaints received by the department have concerned the indiscriminate tipping of refuse. Much of the dumping has been into the streams and watercourses which causes an obstruction to the flow of water besides the fly and odour nuisance. Action has been taken wherever possible.

Filthy and verminous premises are but a small trouble within the district, flea infestations being the commonest form of nuisance. No bed bugs have been found.

Smoke abatement is not a problem affecting the district at the present time.

Rodent Control.

A Rodent Operative has been employed part-time as in the past, working alternate fortnights with Bridgwater R.D.C.
The following treatments have been carried out :-

Property.	Inspected.	Treated.
Domestic	301	295
Agricultural	10	3
Business	20	16
Totals :-	331	314

Sewer treatments have been carried out in eight villages and altogether fifteen schemes of 'block control' have been operated.

Section F.
Camping.

Being a coastal and holiday district the seasonal influx of caravanners and campers is a major problem. The number of licenced camping sites within the area are insufficient to accommodate all. The problem is acute in the Western part of the district.
Apart from the numerical problem there is the one of sanitation. Litter along hedgerows around camping sites has not been abnormal, the worst aspect being the general use of hedgerows as toilets in preference to the proper accommodation provided on sites. This is frequently the result of temporary overcrowding. Consequently a public health nuisance arises and also damage to crops and fences. The licenced sites have been reasonably well supervised and in only one case has the authorised number of caravans been continually exceeded. Action has been taken in this case.
The number of licenced sites in the area is eight.

Section G.
Other Acts Administered by the Department.
Factories Act.
There has been no material change in the number or size of factories in the district. Few complaints have been received regarding working or other conditions. Inspections have been made from time to time to ensure compliance with the Act.

Pet Animals Act.
Rag Flock Act.
There are no Pet Shops within the district or premises dealing in Rag Flock.

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act.
Details of action taken under this Act are included under the heading of Rodent Control (Section E).

Section H.
Summary of Visits & Inspections.

Housing Acts.	Houses Inspected	316
	Informal Notices Served	22
	Formal Notices Served	10
Public Health Acts.	Inspection of Drainage & Sewerage	76
	" " Water Supplies	37
	" " Refuse Disposal	61
	" " Camping Sites	32
	Infectious Disease Investigations	6
	Filthy or Verminous Premises Inspections	11
	Nuisances & Miscellaneous Inspections	30
	Informal Notices Served	17
Food & Drugs Act.	Inspection of Food & Catering Establishments	79
	" " Slaughter Houses & Knackers Yards	45
	Notices Served	1
Prevention of Damage by Pests Act.	Inspections regarding Infestations of Rats & Mice	12
	Informal Notices Served	1
Public Health Complaints Received		128
" " " Investigated		128

On reflection, the overall picture is one of progress in most fields of the work. One cannot judge the work of the department altogether from one date to another as progress is a continuous process.
Towards the end of the year impetus was given to the drive for better housing in the district as a whole but the results of the survey and proposals will not be seen for some years.
In conclusion I would like to thank the departments staff for their friendly co-operation with both myself and the general public, in maintaining and ever trying to improve an important service to the community.

I am, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

M.B., Ch.B.

Medical Officer of Health.